



Ways to Keep Employees Safe in Walk-in Coolers and Freezers



It's a fact: Walk-in coolers and freezers are incredibly dangerous. Not only do they cause worker injuries, but those injuries can be costly. To protect yourself, your fellow employees, your customers, and your company from those costs, here are some tips on how to safely enter a walk-in cooler or freezer.

Wear Safe Footwear

Be sure to wear non-slip shoes with rubber soles – so you don't slip while trying to retrieve a product from a cooler or freezer.

Clean Your Unit

Keeping your cooler or freezer clean is one of the best ways to keep employees safe. A cluttered area can increase the risk for tripping and falls, resulting in an injury. Cluttered coolers or freezers can increase the risk of tripping while working and increase the risk of getting injured.

Dry Freezer Surfaces

Make sure to keep your surface as dry and clean as possible, with no ice patches on the floor that might give someone slip hazard while they work in this chilly environment! Clean spills immediately so you don't have residue building up, which poses an even greater risk of injury from falls.

Use Your Unit Safely

If you have an overstocked freezer, coolers, or shelves in your commercial kitchen, it will be difficult for employees to find the food they need. Ensure that the floor is clear and any stacks of boxes on top are secure, so everyone always has access to their necessities!

Clear floor space, so employees always have access and do not risk getting caught up within such incidents.

Invest in Maintenance and Repairs

Invest in preventive care for your walk-in cooler or freezer to reduce leaks and mold. Routine maintenance will keep them running smoothly! This can significantly improve the safety of your unit, reduce leaks, cut down mold and mildew development, improve the overall safety of your workplace, and prevent employee injuries.

Worker Safety Tips – How to Safely Exit From a Walk-In Cooler or Freezer

Several workers are injured or killed while working in their employer’s walk-in cooler or freezer every year. These tragedies can be avoided by following these simple guidelines for safe exiting. If you work with, on, or around walk-ins, then you should print off these tips and read them every time you go into your freezer. Not only will it help save lives, but it will also protect your company from costly lawsuits related to accidents that occur within walk-ins.

- + Always have at least two escape routes prepared before entering a walk-in
 - + Tell someone outside of your location what items are being removed
 - + Make sure someone else inside knows who is removing items
 - + Receive verbal confirmation from another person before reentering
 - + Use caution when opening heavy doors
- + Always bring an extra set of clothes
 - + Learn how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)
 - + Teach everyone about risks associated with low temperatures
 - + Understand risks associated with refrigeration
 - + Be familiar with proper use of emergency equipment
 - + Do not wear loose clothing

Common Causes of Walking into Walk-In Cooler Hazards

Cold air sinks to floor level in a walk-in cooler or freezer, so employees’ feet may be exposed to potentially unsafe temperatures even when their bodies are secured by personal protective equipment (PPE). The following hazards occur frequently:

- + Ice buildup on floors can cause slip and fall accidents. Make sure employees’ shea have good traction to prevent falls.
- + An unstable door can cause injury from falls or back strain from pushing or pulling. If your door automatically opens outward, add an outside handle so it can be opened safely.
- + Conduct regular inspections of doors to ensure that they operate smoothly and open easily.

Bottom Line

Some employers don’t take proper precautions when assigning tasks to employees working in walk-in coolers or freezers. When a worker is assigned to a task that they aren’t comfortable with, it could lead to mistakes and a higher risk of injuries. Not only do workers need to be trained on their specific jobs, but they should also be aware of any potential hazards that could occur during their workday. The good news is, with just a few precautions and considerations, you can keep everyone safe and healthy.